



## Florida Universities' Tuition and Fees Slightly Below Peers, But All Costs Consume a Higher Percentage of Family Median Income

### *at a glance*

The combined tuition and fees for undergraduate students attending Florida universities are lower than those of peer public universities. Florida's universities have lower tuition compared to their peers, but their general fees tend to be higher.

However, when the major costs of education (tuition, fees, room and board) and Florida's median family income are considered, Florida families face a slightly higher financial burden for a university education than families in other states.

### Scope

This report provides information to assist the Legislature in considering proposals to increase university tuition and fees. The report addresses two questions in response to a legislative request.

- How do undergraduate tuition and general fees at Florida universities compare to those of peer public universities in other states?
- How affordable is undergraduate higher education for Florida families?

### Background

The Florida Legislature has sought to keep Florida university undergraduate tuition and fees low to ensure higher education is affordable and accessible to Florida students. In the Fiscal Year 2003-04 General Appropriations Act, the

Legislature set the tuition rates for resident undergraduates at \$63.41 per credit hour. Florida students taking an average of 12 credits a semester will pay \$1,522 per year in tuition.

In addition to tuition, students must pay general and discretionary fees. Exhibit 1 lists the types of services for which universities may charge general fees. All students must pay these fees regardless of their course of study or use of services. The general fees may be assessed by credit hour or by semester. Three of the fees—building, capital improvement, and financial aid—are set by credit hour in statute. The combined sum of three fees—activity and service, health, and athletic—is capped at 40% of tuition. The fee for financial aid is also capped at 5% of tuition.

#### Exhibit 1

#### *Florida Statutes* Establish General and Discretionary Fees

General Fees	Examples of Discretionary Fees
▪ Activity and Service	▪ Laboratory Materials
▪ Athletic	▪ Library Services
▪ Building	▪ Off-campus Course
▪ Capital Improvement	▪ Orientation
▪ Financial Aid	▪ Parking
▪ Health	▪ Safety and Security
▪ Access/Transportation	▪ Transcripts

Source: OPPAGA analysis.

Universities also may charge discretionary fees for services students choose to use. For instance,

## Information Brief

universities assess fees to cover laboratory materials, library services, orientation, safety and security, and parking. In addition, they may assess a student fees for such services as providing transcripts and covering additional instructional costs of teaching courses. Exhibit 1 lists examples of discretionary fees.

Tuition is uniform among Florida's universities, although fees may vary. As shown in Exhibit 2, total tuition and general fees ranged from \$2,163 to \$2,448 during 2003-04. These differences resulted from differences in general fees, which ranged from \$641 at New College of Florida for 24 credits, to \$926 at Florida Atlantic University.

### Exhibit 2 In 2003-04, Florida Universities Charge an Average of \$2,311 for Resident Tuition and General Fees

	Resident Tuition and General Fees
New College	\$2,163
Florida	2,224
West Florida	2,285
Florida State	2,288
South Florida	2,325
North Florida	2,330
Florida Gulf Coast	2,341
Florida International	2,358
Florida A&M	2,372
Central Florida	2,410
Florida Atlantic	2,448
<b>Average</b>	<b>2,322</b>

Notes: Totals are based on an average student load of 12 credits per semester (24 credits per year). Florida resident undergraduate tuition is \$1,522 a year (\$63.41 per credit x 24 credits).

Source: OPPAGA analysis.

Prior studies have shown that tuition and general fees in Florida's public four-year institutions are below the national average.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Morgan Quitno and *Congressional Quarterly* annually publish state rankings based on the average student costs in all 50 states. Both use data from the National Center for Educational Statistics to calculate rankings. In addition, the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board annually compares Washington universities with other state universities.

However, the organizations that commonly rank state university tuition and fees use statewide averages and do not compare the tuition and fees of Florida institutions to those of similar or peer public universities in other states. Because of the variation in university missions, student bodies, and course offerings, peer comparisons tend to provide more precise information than comparisons using statewide averages.

To identify peers for each Florida university, OPPAGA used the lists of public peer institutions compiled by the Florida Department of Education for its 2003 university funding equity study. These peers were selected using a number of factors including

- institutional mission,
- number and types of degrees awarded,
- number and characteristics of students,
- number of employees,
- institutional expenditures, and
- the institution's classification by the Carnegie Foundation and by the Southern Regional Education Board.<sup>2,3</sup>

Appendix A provides a more detailed discussion of the process used to select peers, while Appendix B lists the peers selected for each Florida university. We compared the resident and non-resident undergraduate tuition and general fees of each Florida university to those of its peers. These comparisons were based on total charges for 12 credits a semester (or 24 credits a year), the average undergraduate student course load in Florida's State University System.

<sup>2</sup> The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education groups American colleges and universities according to their missions using data on the number of degrees awarded by type (doctorate, master's, baccalaureate, etc.) and fields of study offered by each institution.

<sup>3</sup> SREB classifies institutions based on size (numbers of degrees or full-time equivalent enrollment), role (types of degrees), breadth of program offerings (number of program areas in which degrees are granted), and comprehensiveness (distribution of degrees across program areas).

## How do undergraduate tuition and general fees at Florida universities compare to those of peer public universities in other states?

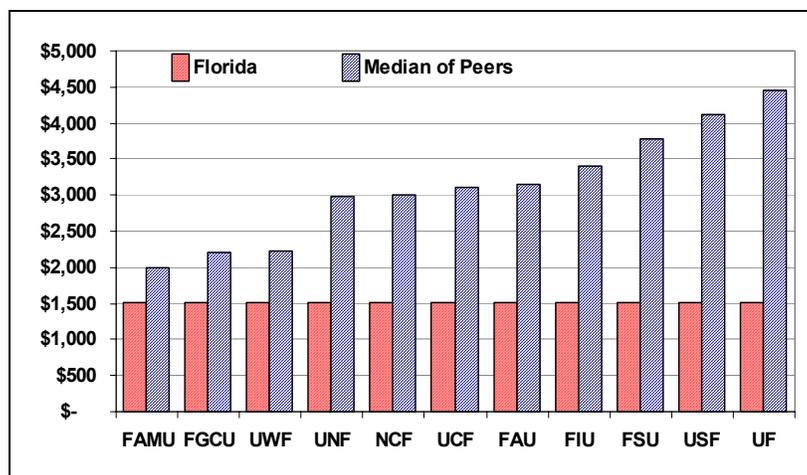
### *Florida universities' combined tuition and general fees for resident undergraduates are lower than those of their peers*

Florida tuition is lower than the median of its peer institutions, while general fees are often higher. As shown in Exhibit 3, in Fiscal Year 2003-04 the resident undergraduate tuition for Florida's 11 universities is significantly below the median tuition of their peer institutions in other states. The difference in resident tuition was smallest for Florida A&M, a difference of \$467. The difference was greatest for the University of Florida, a difference of \$2,942. (See Appendix B for a more detailed comparison.)

In contrast, as shown in Exhibit 4, the general fees assessed by Florida universities in Fiscal Year 2003-04 tend to be higher than the median general fees of their peers. Eight of the 11 Florida universities charge higher general fees than the medians charged by their peers. These differences range from \$439 more at Florida Gulf Coast University to \$24 more at the University of North Florida. Three charge lower fees than their peers, ranging from \$143 less at the University of Florida to \$699 less at New College. (See Appendix B for a more detailed comparison.)

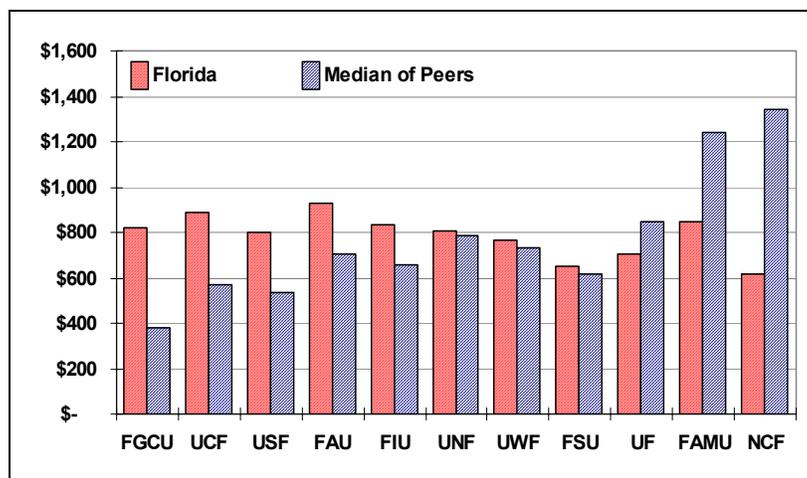
Taken together, the tuition and general fees at Florida universities are below the median tuition and general fees of peer universities.

**Exhibit 3**  
2003-04 Undergraduate Resident Tuition Rates of Florida Universities Are Lower than the Median Tuition Rates of Peer Public Universities in Other States



Notes: Tuition amounts are based on an average student load of 12 hours per semester (24 hours per year).  
Source: OPPAGA analysis.

**Exhibit 4**  
In 2003-04, the General Fees at Eight Florida Universities Are Higher than the Medians of Their Peers



Notes: Costs are based on an average student load of 12 hours per semester (24 hours per year).  
Source: OPPAGA analysis.

As shown in Exhibit 5, differences ranged from \$251 between Florida Gulf Coast University and the median of its peers to \$3,103 between the University of Florida and the median of its peers. The differences tend to be higher for Florida's major research/doctoral universities (Florida State, Florida International, the University of Florida and University of South Florida) and Florida's liberal arts/baccalaureate university (New College) than for Florida's teaching/masters universities.

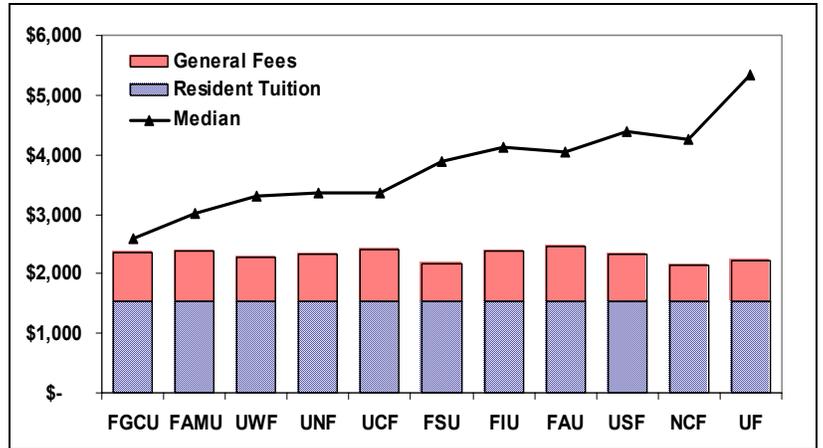
***Most of Florida's universities have lower combined tuition and general fees for non-resident undergraduates than their peers***

This same pattern exists for tuition and fees charged to non-resident students. As shown in Exhibit 6, six of Florida's 11 universities have lower combined tuition and general fees for non-resident undergraduates than the median of their peers. The University of North Florida charges \$1,599 more in non-resident tuition and general fees than its peer institutions, while the University of Florida charges \$3,896 less than its peers. Differences in non-resident tuition and general fees tend to be higher for Florida's major research/doctoral universities than its teaching/master's universities.

Changes to the tuition and fees charged to non-resident students would affect fewer students than would changing tuition and fees for resident students. Non-resident undergraduate student enrollment in the state university system is capped at 10% of the total system-wide enrollment.<sup>4</sup>

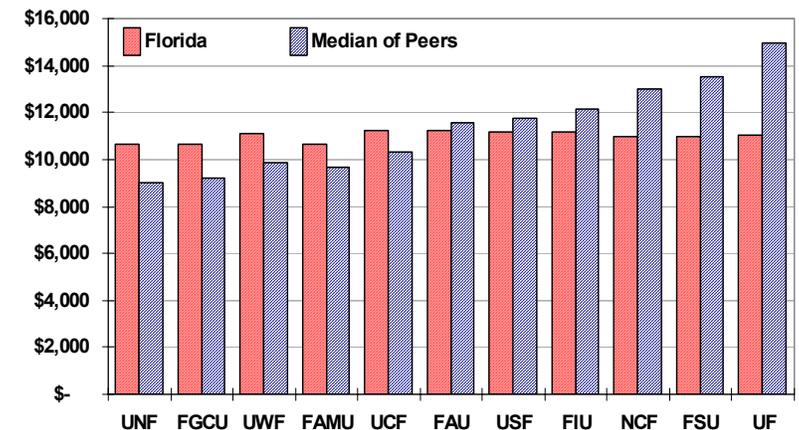
<sup>4</sup> Under Rule 6C-7.006, Florida Administrative Code, non-resident enrollment would be limited to an estimated 15,960 students (10% of the 2003-04 university FTE estimate).

**Exhibit 5**  
**2003-04 Resident Undergraduate Tuition and General Fees at Florida Universities Were Below the Medians of Their Peer Public Universities**



Notes: Tuition and general fee amounts are based on an average student load of 12 hours per semester (24 hours per year).  
 Source: OPPAGA analysis.

**Exhibit 6**  
**Six Florida Universities Have Lower Combined Tuition and General Fees for Non-Resident Undergraduates than the Median of their Peers, 2003-04**



Notes: Tuition and general fee amounts are based on an average student load of 12 hours per semester (24 hours per year).  
 Source: OPPAGA analysis.

## How much does the cost of resident undergraduate higher education consume of Florida median family income?

### *Florida families pay a slightly greater share of their income for higher education-related costs than for families in other states.*

Students' total cost of attending a university includes not only tuition and general fees but also the cost of books and materials, room and board, transportation, and personal expenses. The cost of attending college varies by institution and students' dependency status. For universities in 2001-02, these average costs were \$11,659 for students living on campus and \$12,919 for those living off campus. Most (75 %) of these amounts are living expenses, while tuition and general fees account for up to 18% of the cost to attend a Florida university.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the relatively low cost of resident undergraduate general tuition and general fees in Florida universities, college may not be affordable for many Florida families. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics and the US Census, the average annual cost of sending a child to a Florida university is

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<sup>5</sup> Books, materials, and supplies account for the other 7%. Room and board is the largest college-related expense, 49% of all costs. For more information on the cost of attending college, see OPPAGA [Report No. 03-33](#), *College Attendance Costs Vary and Result from Higher Tuition, Room, and Board*.

17% of Florida's median family income.<sup>6</sup> This burden on Florida families is slightly higher than the average financial burden college costs place on families nationally (16%) and in southeastern states (16%). This difference is largely attributable to the fact that the median Florida family income (\$45,625) is 10% lower than the national median family income (\$50,046). Florida's room and board costs for students are also higher than those of other southeastern states. Consequently, Florida families are likely to pay a higher percentage of their income for college expenses in comparison to families in other parts of the country.

When considering tuition and general fee increases, it is important to consider all college-related expenses. The burden of these costs may be lessened by available financial aid, particularly aid determined by individual or family financial need.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The average annual cost includes tuition, fees, and room and board.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on need-based and other data related to college affordability, see OPPAGA [Report No. 03-47](#), *Compilation of College Affordability Data for Students Who Applied for Federal Aid*.

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OPPAGA supports the Florida Legislature by providing evaluative research and objective analyses to promote government accountability and the efficient and effective use of public resources. This project was conducted in accordance with applicable evaluation standards. Copies of this report in print or alternate accessible format may be obtained by telephone (850/488-0021 or 800/531-2477), by FAX (850/487-3804), in person, or by mail (OPPAGA Report Production, Claude Pepper Building, Room 312, 111 W. Madison St., Tallahassee, FL 32399-1475).

**Florida Monitor:** <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/>

Project supervised by Jane Fletcher (850/487-9255)

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Gary R. VanLandingham, OPPAGA Interim Director

## Appendix A

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# Methodology for Selecting Peer Public Institutions

OPPAGA's methodology for selecting peer public institutions for Florida universities had several steps. First, we examined the peer lists used by the Florida Department of Education in their 2003 university equity funding study. The Department of Education used several lists for comparisons in the report—one proposed by Florida universities and other lists the department developed using the Carnegie and Southern Regional Education Board's classifications. The department identified public institutions as peers based on (1) institutional mission (e.g., land grant, historically black college/university); (2) number and characteristics of students; (3) degrees awarded (by area of study and level); (4) number of employees; (5) institutional expenditures; and (6) Carnegie and Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) classifications.

Second, OPPAGA adjusted the university-proposed and department lists. We excluded peers with different Carnegie or SREB classifications than their Florida companions, as well as Florida universities identified as peers of other Florida universities. We identified peer institutions to the New College of Florida (which was excluded from the department lists) from institutions that were members of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges in the same Carnegie and SREB classifications. We evaluated the remaining public institutions based on the frequency that they appeared on the Department of Education lists. We also gave consideration to public institutions based on regional factors (location in southeastern states) and the area they served (e.g., urban areas). OPPAGA's final list included between 5 and 10 peers for each Florida university. OPPAGA then surveyed these public peer institutions to identify their 2003-04 tuition and general fees for resident and non-resident students.

### ***Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education***

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education was designed to support research in higher education by identifying categories of colleges and universities that would be "homogeneous with respect to the functions of the institutions and characteristics of students and faculty members." This classification groups American colleges and universities according to their missions as revealed in existing data on their behavior. Data used for the classification includes the number of degrees awarded by type (doctorate, master's, baccalaureate, etc.) and the fields of study offered by each institution. In 2000, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching did not use federal research funding as a measurement in classifying institutions.

### ***Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Classification***

The SREB system for categorizing postsecondary education institutions is based on a number of factors relevant to determining resource requirements. Institutions are classified based on size (numbers of degrees or full-time equivalent enrollment), role (types of degrees), breadth of program offerings (number of program areas in which degrees are granted), and comprehensiveness (distribution of degrees across program areas). The SREB classifications do not take into account other factors relevant to determining resource requirements such as cost differences among programs or externally funded research.

## Appendix B

## Peer Institutions Used for Comparison

Florida University and Peer Universities	Resident Tuition	General Fees	Resident Tuition and General Fees	Non-Resident Tuition and General Fees
<b>University of Florida</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 702</b>	<b>\$2,224</b>	<b>\$11,047</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>4,464</i>	<i>846</i>	<i>5,327</i>	<i>14,943</i>
Michigan State University	4,740	822	5,562	13,530
The Ohio State University-Columbus	6,228	423	6,651	16,638
Pennsylvania State University	9,296	410	9,706	19,328
Texas A&M University	2,208	1,847	4,055	9,719
University of Arizona	3,508	96	3,604	12,374
University of Georgia-Athens	3,208	870	4,078	14,854
University of Illinois – Main Campus	5,568	1,486	7,054	18,090
Virginia Polytechnic University	4,188	905	5,093	15,031
<b>Florida State University</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 766</b>	<b>\$2,288</b>	<b>\$11,110</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>3,788</i>	<i>618</i>	<i>3,874</i>	<i>13,532</i>
Arizona State University	3,508	87	3,595	12,115
Indiana University-Bloomington	5,756	761	6,517	7,552
Mississippi State University	3,874	combined with tuition	3,874	8,780
University of Colorado-Boulder	3,192	522	3,714	20,030
University of Kansas	2,821	574	3,395	9,376
University of Maryland-College Park	5,568	1,191	6,759	17,433
University of Tennessee-Knoxville	3,788	662	4,450	13,532
<b>Florida A&amp;M University</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 850</b>	<b>\$2,372</b>	<b>\$10,656</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>1,989</i>	<i>1,244</i>	<i>3,026</i>	<i>9,649</i>
Fort Valley State University	2,010	570	2,580	8,610
North Carolina A&T University	1,470	1,244	2,714	11,635
Prairie View A&M University	1,968	1,018	2,986	7,786
Southern University	3,066	combined with tuition	3,066	8,858
University of Maryland-Eastern Shore	3,563	1,542	5,105	10,440
Virginia State University	1,888	2,462	4,350	11,260
<b>University of South Florida</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 803</b>	<b>\$2,325</b>	<b>\$11,147</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>4,127</i>	<i>536</i>	<i>4,379</i>	<i>11,730</i>
Old Dominion University	3,816	158	3,974	11,294
Temple University	8,134	400	8,534	15,294
Texas Tech University	2,208	1,985	4,193	9,857
University of Alabama-Birmingham	2,784	494	3,278	7,454
University of Cincinnati	6,336	1,287	7,623	19,230
University of Houston	2,208	1,652	3,860	10,454
University of Louisville	4,450	combined with tuition	4,450	12,166
University of South Carolina	5,548	300	5,848	15,186
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	4,439	668	5,107	17,858
Wayne State University	3,730	578	4,308	9,125
<b>Florida Atlantic University</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 926</b>	<b>\$2,448</b>	<b>\$11,218</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>3,146</i>	<i>702</i>	<i>4,039</i>	<i>11,571</i>
Cleveland State University	5,424	648	6,072	11,940
Georgia State University	3,208	712	3,920	13,544
Portland State University	2,160	692	2,852	9,114
University of Akron-Main Campus	5,846	963	6,809	12,800
University of Memphis	4,146	88	4,234	12,388
University of Nevada-Las Vegas	2,040	252	2,292	10,779
University of New Orleans	3,084	1,074	4,158	11,202
University of Texas-Arlington	2,304	968	3,272	7,736

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Florida University and Peer Universities	Resident Tuition	General Fees	Resident Tuition and General Fees	Non-Resident Tuition and General Fees
<b>University of West Florida</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 763</b>	<b>\$2,285</b>	<b>\$11,107</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>2,221</i>	<i>734</i>	<i>3,309</i>	<i>9,888</i>
Fitchburg State College (MA)	970	3,230	4,200	10,280
Rhode Island College	3,300	795	4,095	10,295
State University of West Georgia	2,212	562	2,774	9,410
University of Colorado-Colorado Springs	3,024	734	3,758	14,868
University of Louisiana-Monroe	2,230	combined with tuition	2,230	8,182
University of Texas-Pan American	1,872	594	2,466	8,130
Valdosta State University	2,212	648	2,860	9,496
William Paterson University (NJ)	6,330	790	7,120	11,510
<b>University of Central Florida</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 888</b>	<b>\$2,410</b>	<b>\$11,232</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>3,110</i>	<i>567</i>	<i>3,344</i>	<i>10,329</i>
Central Michigan University	3,570	765	4,335	9,879
George Mason University	3,630	1,482	5,112	14,952
Northern Arizona University	3,508	88	3,596	12,116
Portland State University	2,160	692	2,852	9,114
San Diego State University	2,046	442	2,488	9,256
University of Missouri-St. Louis	4,670	969	5,639	13,197
University of Nevada-Las Vegas	2,040	252	2,292	10,779
University of South Alabama	2,712	380	3,092	5,804
<b>Florida International University</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 836</b>	<b>\$2,358</b>	<b>\$11,181</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>3,404</i>	<i>657</i>	<i>4,114</i>	<i>12,162</i>
George Mason University	3,630	1,482	5,112	14,952
Georgia State University	3,208	712	3,920	13,544
University of Colorado-Denver	3,028	588	3,616	15,244
University of Houston	2,208	1,652	3,860	9,524
University of Nevada-Las Vegas	2,040	252	2,292	10,779
Virginia Commonwealth University	3,600	1,269	4,869	17,213
Wayne State University	3,730	578	4,308	9,125
Western Michigan University	3,946	602	4,548	10,559
<b>University of North Florida</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 808</b>	<b>\$2,330</b>	<b>\$10,614</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>2,974</i>	<i>784</i>	<i>3,366</i>	<i>9,015</i>
Boise State University	2,119	1,132	3,251	9,971
Kean University (NJ)	4,448	2,275	6,723	9,086
Kennesaw State University (GA)	2,212	566	2,778	9,414
Marshall University	3,260	combined with tuition	3,260	8,944
Northern Kentucky University	3,744	combined with tuition	3,744	7,992
Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville	2,688	784	3,472	6,120
<b>Florida Gulf Coast University</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 819</b>	<b>\$2,341</b>	<b>\$10,625</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>2,212</i>	<i>380</i>	<i>2,592</i>	<i>9,228</i>
Augusta State University	2,212	380	2,592	9,228
California State University-San Marcos	2,046	368	2,414	9,182
Francis Marion University (SC)	4,947	150	5,097	10,044
Georgia Southwestern State University	2,212	586	2,798	9,434
Louisiana State University-Shreveport	2,118	470	2,588	6,918
<b>New College of Florida</b>	<b>\$1,522</b>	<b>\$ 641</b>	<b>\$2,163</b>	<b>\$10,986</b>
<i>Peer Median</i>	<i>2,998</i>	<i>1,340</i>	<i>4,254</i>	<i>12,967</i>
Evergreen State College (WA)	3,651	168	3,819	13,497
Mary Washington College (VA)	2,344	2,344	4,688	12,436
St. Mary's College (MD)	7,550	1,253	8,803	15,060
University of North Carolina-Asheville	1,673	1,428	3,101	11,428

Note: Annual costs are for undergraduate students beginning in fall 2003-04 enrolling in 24 credit hours for the school year.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of institutional data.

# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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February 6, 2004

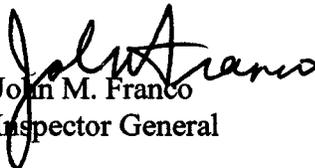
Mr. Gary VanLandingham, Interim Director  
Office of Program Policy Analysis and  
Government Accountability  
111 West Madison Street, Room 312  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1475

Dear Mr. VanLandingham:

The Department of Education's Division of Colleges and Universities has reviewed the draft report of the preliminary and tentative findings and recommendations for *Florida Universities' Attendance Costs Slightly Below Peers, But Require a Higher Percentage of Family Median Income*. Since there are no recommendations for the Department, we concur with the draft report.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 245-9416.

Sincerely,

  
John M. Franco  
Inspector General

JMF/br

cc: Commissioner Horne  
Debra Austin  
Tim Jones

JOHN M. FRANCO, CIG, CIA, CFE, CGAP  
INSPECTOR GENERAL